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C O N F I D E N T I A L ALGIERS 000396

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/07/2018

TAGS: PREL PTER AG
SUBJECT: HAMAS OFFICIAL ASKS BOUTEFLIKA'S HELP IN RESOLVING
INTERNAL PALESTINIAN STRUGGLE

Classified By: AMBASSADOR ROBERT S. FORD. REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

¶1. (SBU) The Algerian Arabic-language newspaper Ennahar reported April 5 that a representative from the Palestinian Hamas movement in Lebanon, Usama Hamdan, said during an April 4 press conference at the Hamas office in Algiers that he had asked the Algerian authorities to mediate between Hamas and Fatah to resolve the Palestinian internal struggle. Hamdan claimed that he had received a positive response from the Algerian officials he had met during his course of a visit to Algiers early this month. Hamdan added that Hamas hoped Algeria would regain the "leading role" it had played in the past.

¶2. (C) Comment: The Algerian government made no official statement about Hamdan's visit, or the role they might play in resolving the Hamas-Fatah dispute. Hamdan reportedly met last week with Algerian Prime Minister Abdelaziz Belkhadem, known for his Arab-Islamist sympathies. The Algerian public is emotionally attached to the Palestinian issue. If President Bouteflika were able to mediate successfully among the Palestinians, it would boost his popularity at home as he ponders a possible third presidential term. We leave it to our colleagues in Middle East posts to judge whether Algeria has the capacity to play a mediator role.

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